WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A system for reporting information regarding use of one or more software products,

comprising:

5   a report user interface;

one or more sets of report user interface definition files, wherein a set of report user

interface definition files customizes the report user interface for reporting information

regarding a particular software product; and

a report client for presenting the report user interface.

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2.   The system of claim 1 wherein the report user interface facilitates reporting

information regarding a problem encountered by a software user.

3.   The system of claim 1, further comprising:

15   a report file generated by the client, wherein the report file is based on information

entered by way of the report user interface.

4.   The system of claim 3, further comprising:

a server to which the report file can be transmitted by the client.

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5.   The system of claim 3 wherein the report file can be saved in incomplete form in a

first session in which the client is run, wherein the report file can be completed in a later

session in which the client is run.

6.   The system of claim 3, further comprising:

a report package generated by the client, wherein the report package contains the report file and additional report information.

5   7.   The system of claim 6 wherein the report package comprises a cabinet file.

8.   The system of claim 6 wherein the additional report information includes hardware information for a computer operated by a software user.

10   9.   The system of claim 6 wherein the additional report information includes files required in accordance with the set of report user interface definition files.

10.   The system of claim 6 wherein the additional report information includes files designated by a software user.

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11.   The system of claim 1 wherein the one or more sets of files comprise one or more text files formatted in accordance with a markup language.

12.   The system of claim 11 wherein the one or more text files are formatted in accordance

20   with Extensible Markup Language (XML).

13.   The system of claim 12 wherein the client comprises an XML control parser.

14.   The system of claim 1 wherein the report user interface is dynamically configurable

based on information entered by a software user.

15.   The system of claim 1 wherein a set of report user interface definition files comprises:

a report parent file; and

5   one or more additional report user interface definition files, wherein an additional

report user interface definition file corresponds to a child screen in the report user interface.

16.   The system of claim 1, further comprising a user authentication component for

obtaining identification credentials for a software user.

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17.   A method for obtaining information regarding use of a software product, the method

comprising:

obtaining information reported by a user of the software product by way of a general

report client and one or more report user interface definition files, wherein the report user

15   interface definition files specify a user interface presented by the general report client and

customized with respect to the software product; and

modifying the one or more report user interface definition files based on the

information reported by the user.

20   18.   The method of claim 17 wherein the user is a beta-testing user.

19.   The method of claim 17 wherein the one or more report user interface definition files

comprise one or more text files formatted in accordance with a markup language.

20.   The method of claim 19 wherein the one or more text files are formatted in
accordance with Extensible Markup Language (XML).

21.   A method for debugging a computer program, the method comprising:

obtaining bug information reported by a user of the computer program by way of a
general report client and one or more report user interface definition files, wherein the one or
more report user interface definition files specify a user interface that is presented by the
general report client and customized for reporting on the computer program; and

modifying source code for the computer program based on the bug information.

22.   The method of claim 21 wherein the one or more report user interface definition files
comprise one or more text files formatted in accordance with a markup language.

23.   The method of claim 22 wherein the one or more text files are formatted in
accordance with Extensible Markup Language (XML).

24.   The method of claim 21, further comprising:

modifying the one or more report user interface definition files based on the bug
information reported by the user.

25.   A method for reporting, by a user, information regarding use of a software product,
the method comprising:

running a report client;

causing the client to load one or more report user interface definition files customized

with respect to the software product;

entering information in a report user interface displayed by the client; and

uploading a completed report to a server.

5   26.   The method of claim 25 wherein the entering information causes the client to load one or more additional report user interface definition files.

27.   The method of claim 25, further comprising:

deciding whether to submit an anonymous report.

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28.   The method of claim 25, further comprising:

naming one or more files to be submitted with the completed report.

29.   The method of claim 25, further comprising:

15   saving an incomplete report in a first session in which the report client is run; and

completing the incomplete report in a subsequent session in which the report client is run.

30.   A method for authenticating a user submitting a report on a software product, the

20   method comprising:

generating a report user identification for the user; and

generating an expiration date for the user.

31.   The method of claim 30 wherein the report user identification comprises a

cryptographically-random signed 64-bit integer.

32. The method of claim 30, further comprising:

causing the report user identification and the expiration date to be stored in a ticket

5   file on a computer operated by the user.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein the ticket file is a text file formatted in accordance

with a markup language.

10   34. The method of claim 33 wherein the ticket file is formatted in accordance with

Extensible Markup Language (XML).

35. The method of claim 30 wherein the generating the report user identification and the

generating the expiration date are accomplished by way of a web service.

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36. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for

implementing a method for obtaining information regarding use of a software product, the

method comprising:

obtaining information reported by a user of the software product by way of a general

20   report client and one or more report user interface definition files, wherein the report user

interface definition files specify a user interface presented by the general report client and

customized with respect to the software product; and

modifying the one or more report user interface definition files based on the

information reported by the user.

37.   A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for

implementing a method for debugging a computer program, the method comprising:

        obtaining bug information reported by a user of the computer program by way of a

5   general report client and one or more report user interface definition files, wherein the one or

more report user interface definition files specify a user interface that is presented by the

general report client and customized for reporting on the computer program; and

        modifying source code for the computer program based on the bug information.

10   38.   A computer-readable medium storing computer-executable instructions and

computer-readable data comprising an executable client for facilitating preparation of a

report by a user on a software product, wherein the executable client implements a method

comprising:

        loading and parsing one or more report user interface definition files associated with

15   the software product; and

        causing a display of a report user interface customized for reporting information

regarding the software product.

39.   The computer-readable medium of claim 38 wherein the one or more report user

20   definition files are formatted in accordance with a markup language.

40.   The computer-readable medium of claim 38 wherein the markup language is

Extensible Markup Language (XML).

41. A computer-readable medium storing computer-readable data comprising:

one or more report user interface definition files, wherein the one or more report user

interface definition files specify a report user interface customized for reporting information

regarding use of a particular software product, and wherein the one or more report user

5 interface definition files are capable of being read by a general report client.